

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 INR-07 LAB-04

NSAE-00 SIL-01 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 L-03 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 DHA-02 /064 W

-----140224Z 078784 /70

R 122034Z MAY 77

FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3167

AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY PANAMA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

USIA WASHDC

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E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: PINS, NU

SUBJECT: CENSORSHIP PROTEST: UPDATE

REF: MANAGUA 2160

SUMMARY: THE GON HAS RESPONDED IN ITS TYPICAL SUBTLE FASHION TO JOURNALISTS' PRESSURE FOR END OF CENSORSHIP--TWO ARRESTS AND NO FLEXIBILITY. THE JOURNALISTS ARE PICKING UP MORAL SUPPORT AND HAVE BECOME FEISTY. SOMOZA IS UNLIKELY TO GIVE IN, SO PROLONGED STATE OF TENSION IS EXPECTED. END SUMMARY

1. THERE HAS BEEN NO PUBLIC MENTION OF RADIO JOURNALISTS' STRIKE, BUT GON PRESS SPOKESMAN HAS TOLD JOURNALISTS THAT GON WANTS END OF CENSORSHIP TOO AND IT WILL BE LIFTED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AFTER DECISION HAS BEEN HANDED DOWN BY SUPREME COURT ON APPEALS OF CONVICTIONS AND SENTENCES GIVEN BY MILITARY TRIBUNAL ON FSLN CASES.

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2. A MORE TYPICAL RESPONSE BY GON OCCURED EVENING OF MAY 9 WHEN POLICE PATROL BROKE INTO JOURNALISTS MEETING HALL, ARRESTED THE GUARD AND TOOK AWAY ANTI-CENSORSHIP PAMPHLETS, BOOKS, DOCUMENTS, ETC. OSTENSIBLE REASON WAS GUARD WAS POSTING LEAFLETS OUTSIDE HALL AND FLED INSIDE WHEN POLICE APPEARED. THEY PURSUED, SUBDUED AND ARRESTED HIM, AND TOOK EVIDENCE OF HIS CRIME. ON MAY 11, A JOURNALIST WAS ARRESTED FOR HANDING OUT ANTI-CENSORSHIP LEAFLETS INSIDE

NATIONAL CONGRESS. IN BOTH CASES THE CHARGE WAS DISTRIBUTING PAMPHLETS WITHOUT A PERMIT.

3. THE JOURNALISTS HAVE FORMED A PERMANENT COMMITTEE TO FIGHT AGAINST CENSORSHIP, BEGUN ISSUING COMMUNIQUEs TO PROTEST GON ACTIONS, AND HAVE DRAWN SUPPORT FROM NEARLY ALL MAJOR UNION CONFEDERATIONS AND SOME IMPORTANT PRIVATE SECTOR ORGANIZATIONS. FOR THE FIRST TIME, MANAGUA NEWSPAPER, TV AND RADIO JOURNALISTS ARE UNITED. THEY APPEAR TO BE PLEASED WITH THEMSELVES FOR HAVING GOTTEN THEIR ACT TOGETHER AND VOW TO CONTINUE THEIR FIGHT UNTIL CENSORSHIP ENDS.

4. SOMOZA HISTORICALLY REJECTS CONCESSIONS UNDER PRESSURE, ESPECIALLY PUBLIC PRESSURE. THERE IS NO APPARENT ROOM FOR COMPROMISE. THE INDICATION IS A PROLONGED CONFRONTATION.

5. COMMENT: WITH THE JOURNALISTS ADDED TO THE CHURCH, THE U.S. AND NUMEROUS INTERNATIONAL GROUPS WHICH ARE ATTEMPTING TO INFLUENCE CHANGES IN GON POLICIES, SOMOZA IS UNDER GREATER PRESSURE THAN HE OR ANYONE ELSE IMAGINED POSSIBLE. WHILE HE IS UNDER SIEGE, SOMOZA IS UNLIKELY TO SERIOUSLY CONTEMPLATE LIFTING STATE OF SIEGE WHICH INCLUDES CENSORSHIP. A MORE LIKELY RESPONSE IS INCREASED TOUGHNESS.
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